A dozen years ago, when I decided to become a psychology professor, I realized that I was committing myself to a lifetime of learning. One happy truth that I never anticipated, however, was the healthy extent to which my learning would come from my students. Over the years, I have marveled at my students’ ability to produce novel theoretical perspectives, design ingenious methodologies, and craft fresh statistical strategies. My students have both educated and humbled me time and again with their creative insight into the human psyche.

The WAC program serves as yet another prime context for students teaching the teachers. As Dr. Essid reminds us, the vast majority of faculty lack training in the...
from adversary to friend,
from short-term interest
for long-term interest,
from mindless compliance
to mindful internalization,
from mandate to collabor-
to name but a few.

The Writing Fel-
lows have also deepened
my sensitivity to other
important issues relating
to good writing. Thanks
to my involvement in
WAC, I employ (with
rousing success) write-to-
learn activities in the
classroom. I'm happy to
report that these assign-
ments engage my students
in learning to a far greater
degree than any techno-
logical prop, Austin Pow-
ers joke, or fervent ser-
mon on the wisdom of
William James. Perhaps
the most tangible benefits
of the Writing Fellows
derive from their intangi-
table elements: their genuine
passion for good writing, their
relentless desire to help their
students, and their boundless
drive to share in our Univer-
sity's academic and intellectual
mission. My Writing Fellows'
fresh enthusiasm is delight-
fully contagious. I look for-
ward to absorbing knowledge
from them about the canons of
good writing and effective
commentary for many years to
come.

References
Commentary Strategies: Methods
of Accessing
the Writer Behind the Writing. (www.richmond.edu/
eng376/fall97/cfett/final.html)

Better than
Austin Powers
(Continued from page 1)
art of giving effective
commentary on written
work. The only way we,
as faculty, know how to
treat a paper is to treat it
the way ours were once
treated: three cups of di-
rective commentary with
only a pinch of facilitative
commentary (if that). But
thanks to our exposure to
students in the Writing
Fellows program, faculty
are slowly but surely em-
bracing some much-
needed shifts in
metaphorical orientations
(Fetterer, 1998). One can
choose from many such
metaphorical shifts - a
change from harsh critic
to gentle motivator, from
drill sergeant to coach.

Coaching: The Tutoring Experience
Brandon Cox, WAC Fellow/Athlete Study Hall Tutor
I find that the
biggest obstacle athletes
face concerning their
writing skills is confi-
dence. The majority of
students I work with be-
lieve that because they
are athletically gifted,
they must lack intelli-
gence. They have suc-
 cumbed to the “dumb
jock” syndrome.

In general, the
papers I see consist of a
basic structure. The
majority of the needed
components are there,
but something is miss-
ing. That something is
a forceful and confident
argument. The first
invite Fellows to attend in the teams that are assigned to classes. They would work together in groups on problematic papers from their classes, learn more about special topics, enjoy lunch and social time. Fellows attending the session would be paid an honorarium. Let either of us know if you have suggestions for useful topics or activities during the Fellows’ retreat.

After some lobbying by Dr. Hickey and me, Student Financial Aid approved a long-awaited raise for Fellows. A similar raise is in the works for Writing Center Tutors, who have been pretty busy this Fall! Meanwhile, we are thankful for the work done by our new colleague, Beth Bradford, who works with our ESL students. We encourage you to tell students about Ms. Bradford’s hours: Monday and Thursday afternoons, 4-7pm. If you stop by the Center, you’ll find faster computers in our tutoring rooms. These machines offer better Web access, MS Office 97, PageMill, and Photoshop LE. Hopefully, more machines are on the horizon as well, and this will enable Fellows and tutors to provide (the newly reorganized) Writer’s Web materials, work on Web sites, and conduct other activities. The computers arrived just in time: Business School students will start bringing their Web-portfolio to the Center next semester. At least one Writing Fellow will be working with Pierce Young, coordinator of the portfolio project, to train other students in reading and commenting on the portfolios.

I’m proud to see this newsletter take shape. Thanks to Dona Hickey’s guidance, and the outstanding coordination of your work in the last few years by Daniel Hocutt and Terry Dolson, WAC is ready to take its next steps in helping writers at UR. We want your input, as is typical in our collaborative venture. You folks make the program work from semester to semester, and we appreciate that. Good luck in your classes!

Coaching...

Often, the students present a very vague argument with little or no support from the text. I then ask extremely specific questions that range from basic to almost ridiculous. This devil’s advocate tactic often produces a rise in the students, causing them to explain the reasoning behind their position. Once that occurs, I simply say, “That’s what you need to write.”

Athletes’ lack in confidence can also be seen in their body language and attitude during a conference. As the conference begins, the students seem shy or even uninterested. They usually have their arms crossed and sit
And from the WAC Fellows Coordinator...

When I first heard about Writing Across the Curriculum, 10 years ago, I didn’t foresee that it would become such a part of my life... My first experience was researching and writing a booklet for professors at VCU, describing “writing to learn” activities that professors in various disciplines could use to get students engaged in the content of their courses. Since then, when teaching writing, I have used these techniques myself and found them to be almost revolutionary. I have moved, in WAC lingo, from “the sage on the stage” to “guide on the side.”

I really enjoy working with others who have the same experience with writing in the classroom. As I was reminded at the Spillman Symposium that Joe and I recently attended, WAC people tend to be not just thoughtful writers, but also dedicated teachers. I would like to hear from others in the University of Richmond community who have had experiences with writing that have affected their teaching and/or learning. The essays in this first newsletter by Scott Allison and Brandon Cox are excellent examples of the exciting things going on at University of Richmond that the WAC program facilitates. Call me at x6432 or e-mail me (tdolson@richmond.edu) with any thoughts you have about this newsletter, or suggestions for the ones to follow.

(Continued from page 3)

far enough away from me that they cannot see the paper. I usually begin the session with an informal conversation to relieve the tension. I start critiquing the paper with questions. This causes the students to move closer and become part of the conference. It is also helpful to relate personal experiences with writing to emphasize that they are not inferior. Stereotypically, athletes exude self-confidence. However, this confidence does not always carry over into their academic lives. These students have the ability to be good writers. They just need some assurance and encouragement.